

Harpers Ferry / Overview Slideshow

By the mid-1800s, the nation was divided over the issue of slavery. Some northerners had come to regard slavery as immoral and supported emancipation, but in the South and in Border States from Delaware to Missouri slavery prospered.

Boston broadside, 1858. “An American Time Capsule” collection, American memory, Library of Congress, Rare Book and Special Collections Division



JOHN C. FREMONT.

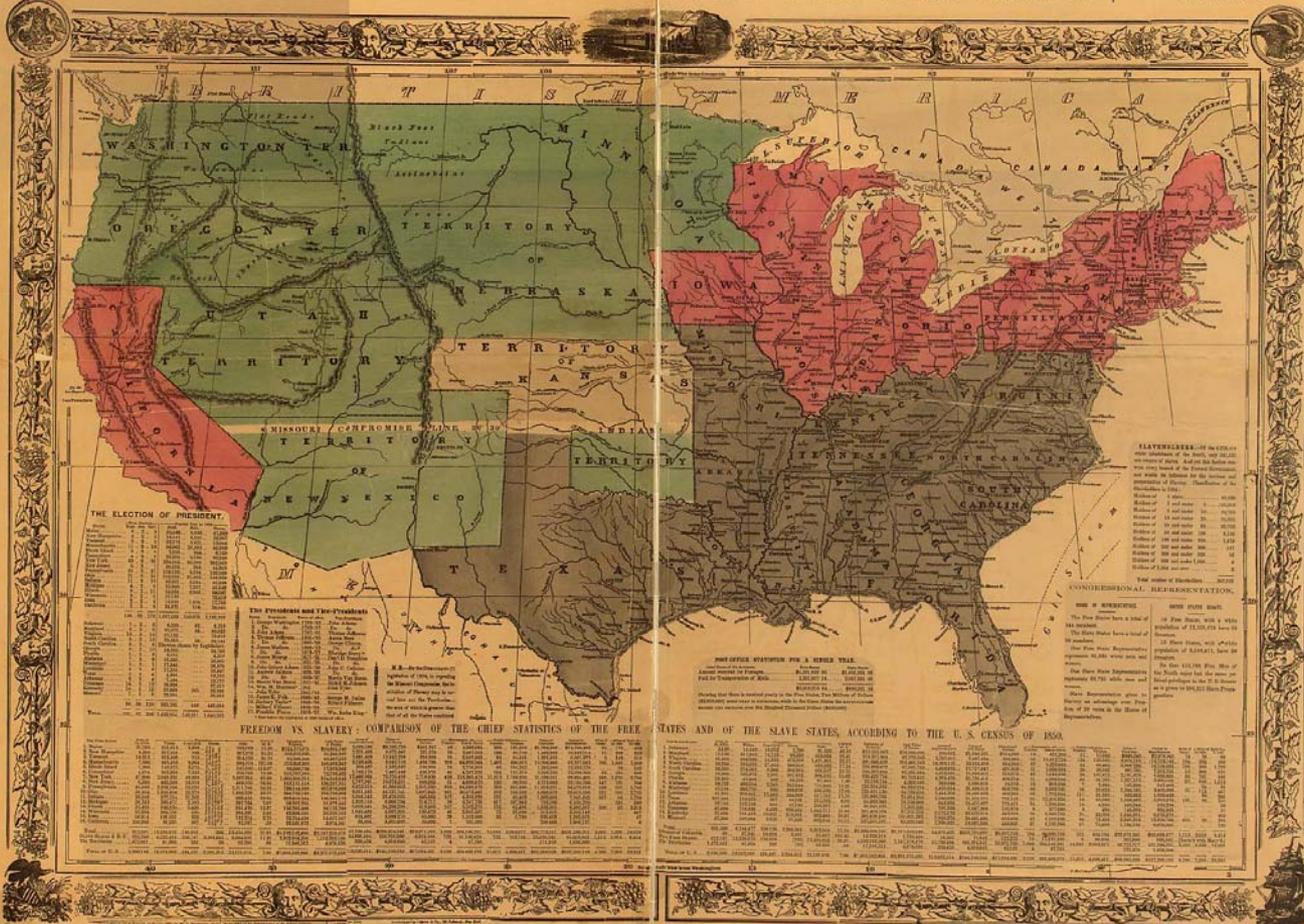
REYNOLDS'S POLITICAL MAP OF THE UNITED STATES,

DESIGNED TO EXHIBIT
THE COMPARATIVE AREA OF THE FREE AND SLAVE STATES,
AND THE TERRITORY OPEN TO SLAVERY OR FREEDOM BY THE REPEAL OF THE MISSOURI COMPROMISE.
WITH A COMPARISON OF THE PRINCIPAL STATISTICS OF THE FREE AND SLAVE STATES, FROM THE CENSUS OF 1850.



WM. L. DAYTON.

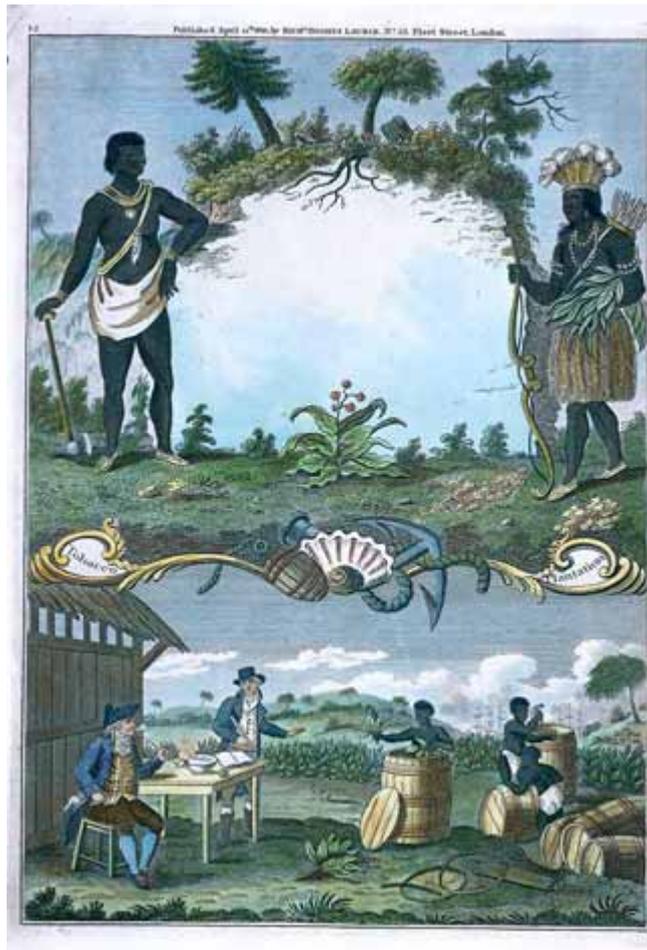
NEW YORK: Published by WM. C. REYNOLDS, No. 126 Broadway, and J. C. JONES, No. 1 Spruce Street. CHICAGO: RUFUS BLANCHARD, No. 52 La Salle Street.



Southern slavery was a form of legal property ownership and a way to enforce the social inferiority of African American people to whites. At its heart it was a labor system adapted to the economic purposes of southerners. With tens of thousands of square miles of fertile land, a hospitable climate, and a geography of roads and rivers that led to ports along the Atlantic and the Gulf of Mexico, Southern states used slave labor to create an efficient agricultural economy.



Ollier, Edmund. "Slaves Working on a Plantation." *Cassell's History of the United States*, [no publication date]. pg. 493.

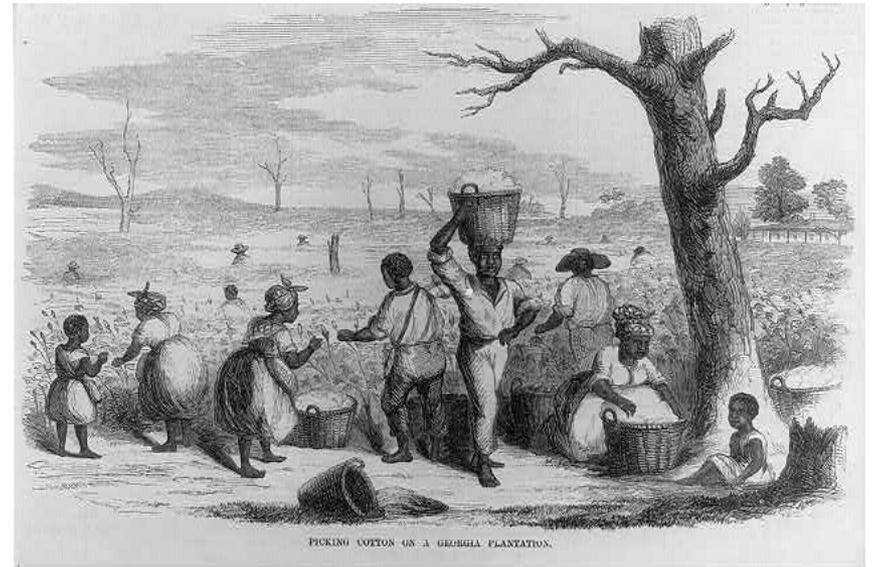


Tobacco Plantation, 1821

Slaves provided much of the labor for the early tobacco industry in North America. In the center of this engraving, the scallop, shell, cask, and fouled anchor symbolize the ties between Chesapeake plantations and merchant shipping.

<http://www.mariner.org/captivepassage/arrival/captions/arr006-01.html>

Slave labor enabled southern farmers to produce and sell cash crops such as cotton, tobacco, sugar and rice to European and northern markets. Cotton had been one of the most valuable commodities in international trade, and the southern United States had produced over 80% of the world's supply. Other industries such as construction used slaves as well. Slaves were vital to sustaining America's economy.

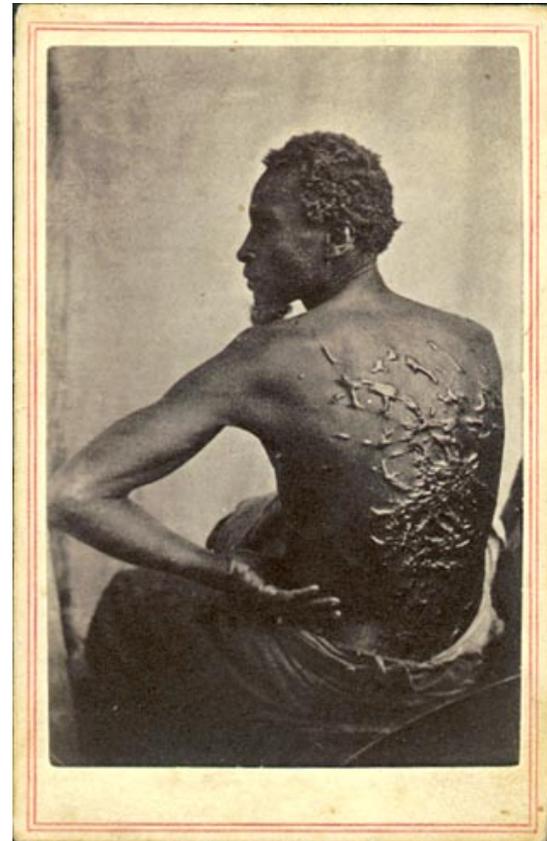


“Picking Cotton on a Georgia Plantation.” Illustration. *Ballou's Pictorial*, 1858. From Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Online Catalog. <http://lcweb2.loc.gov/pp/pphome.html>.

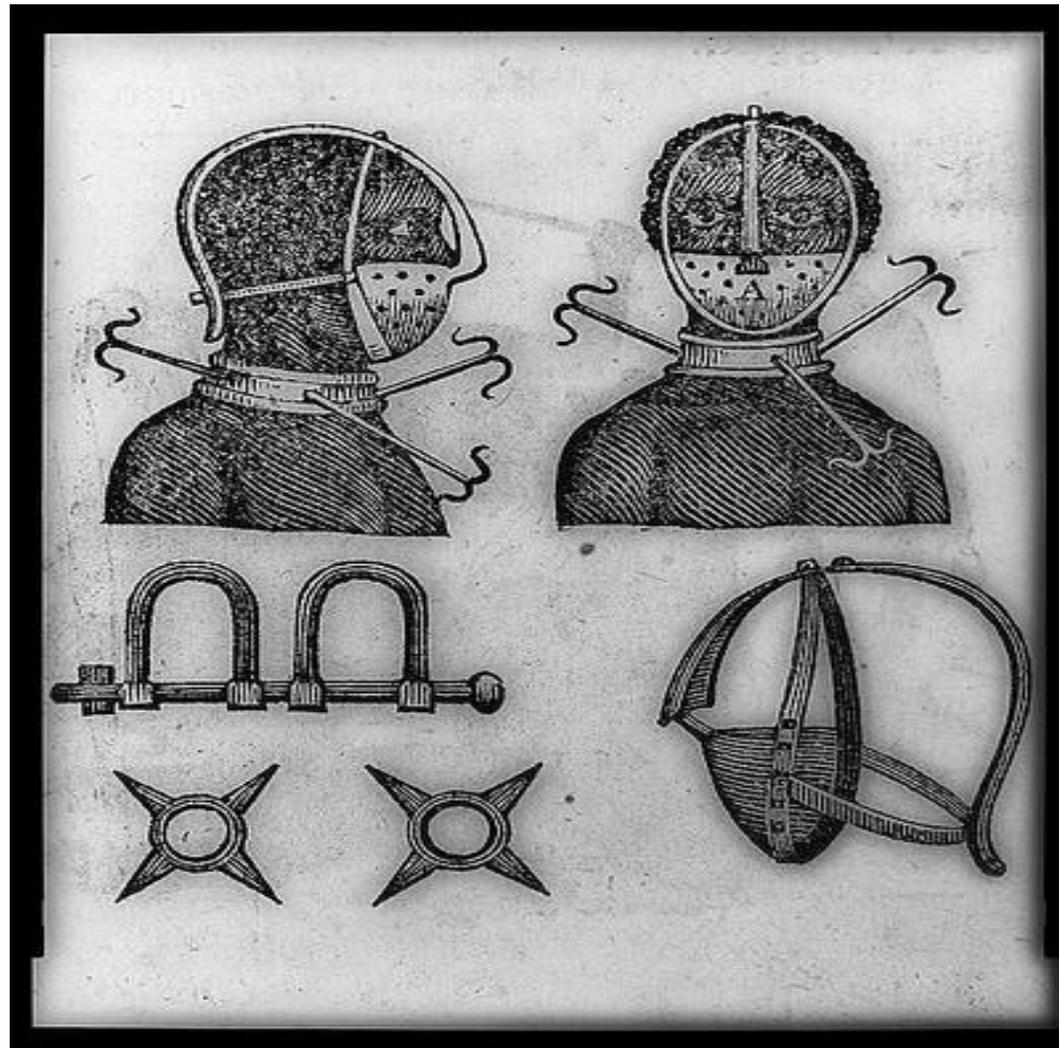


"Reaping." Illustration. *Harper's Weekly*, Jan. 5, 1867. From Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Online Catalog. <http://lcweb2.loc.gov/pp/pphome.html>.

Conditions of enslavement varied. In some instances, masters treated slaves decently. Generally, they were people regarded as sub-human, and were treated cruelly, overworked, and even tortured. Whipping was a notorious form of punishment and could result in permanent scars, physical handicap, or even death.

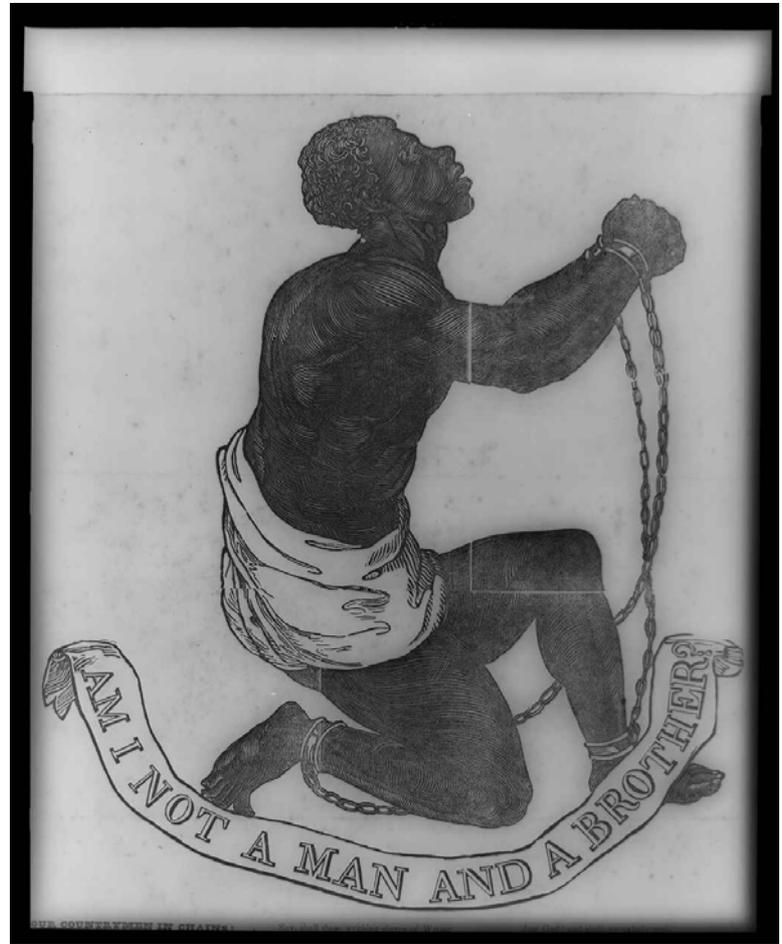


[http://www.be-hold.com/
content/Images/images28/whipslav.jpg](http://www.be-hold.com/content/Images/images28/whipslav.jpg)



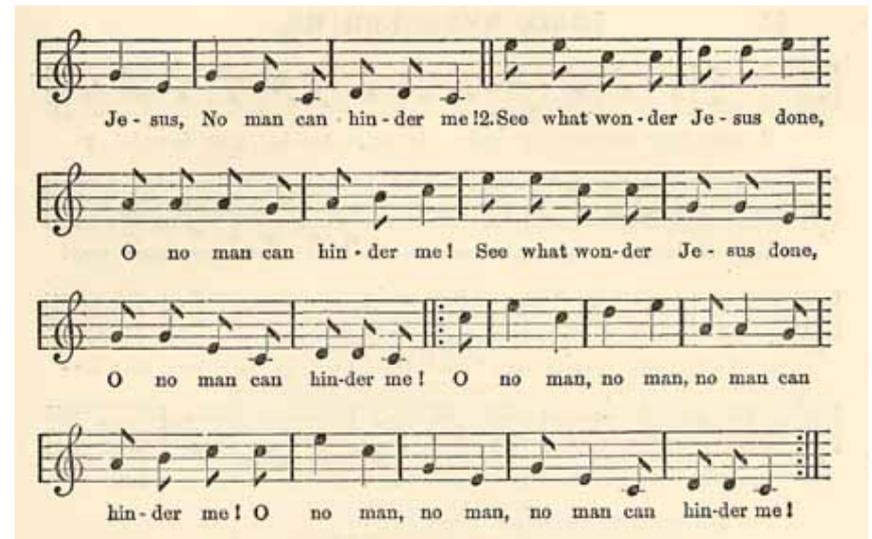
“[Iron mask, collar, leg shackles and spurs used to restrict slaves].” Illustration. *The penitential tyrant*, 1807. From Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Online Catalog. <http://lcweb2.loc.gov/pp/pphome.html>.

To be a slave meant a lifetime of bondage, with little access to education and basic human rights and little possibility of seeing a single day of freedom.



<http://www.msp.umb.edu/primarymaterials/afam/bondage.jpg>

In cities, in churches, and on plantations, the enslaved people and free African Americans created camaraderie and communities to help each other, to organize acts of resistance, and to maintain hope for freedom in the future, even in the face of severe oppression.



Musical notation for "No man can hinder me" *Slave Songs of the United States*
<http://docsouth.unc.edu/church/allen/fig20.html> ©
UNC Chapel Hill

In some instances slave networks and communities planned and coordinated armed rebellions, such as the Stono Rebellion in 1739 and Nat Turner's rebellion in 1831. Free blacks and abolitionists resisted slavery in other ways. Frederick Douglass, an African American who escaped slavery, and William Lloyd Garrison, a white abolitionist, worked for emancipation by detailing the horrors of captivity in anti-slavery newspapers such as Garrison's *The Liberator* and Douglass' *The North Star*.

HORRID MASSACRE IN VIRGINIA



The Scenes which the above Plate is designed to represent, are—Fig. 1. a Mother intruding for the lives of her children.—2. Mr. Travis, cruelly murdered by his own Slaves.—3. Mr. Barrow, who bravely defended himself with his wife escaped.—4. A camp of mounted Dragons in pursuit of the Blacks.

Woodcut depicting Nat Turner's rebellion. Show students how slave owners are depicted gallantly and victimized while blacks appear ruthless and aggressive. http://www.americaslibrary.gov/jb/colonial/jb_colonial_stono_2_e.html



William Garrison's Liberator.

<http://www.cr.nps.gov/nr/travel/underground/antislav.htm>

By the 1850s, the anti-slavery movement had gathered significant momentum. The Underground Railroad, composed of free blacks and sympathetic whites, helped escaped slaves hide in the free states and get to the sanctuary of Canada, beyond the reach of slave catchers. In 1852, Harriet Beecher Stowe published the anti-slavery novel *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, which sold hundreds of thousands of copies and generated widespread sympathy for the enslaved. Still, slavery remained legal in half the nation's states and territories.



“The underground railroad / Chas. T. Webber.”
Photographic print. Reproduction of a painting by Charles T. Webber, c. 1893. From Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Online Catalog. <http://lcweb2.loc.gov/pp/pphome.html>.

135,000 SETS, 270,000 VOLUMES SOLD.

UNCLE TOM'S CABIN



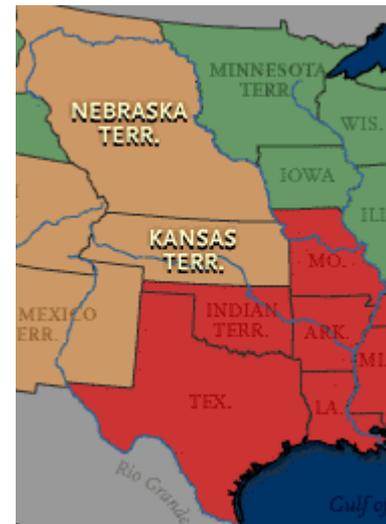
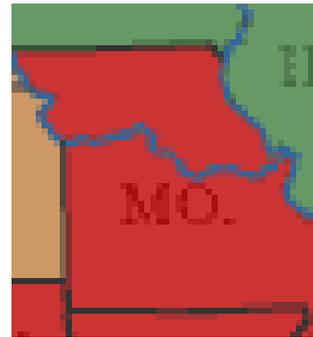
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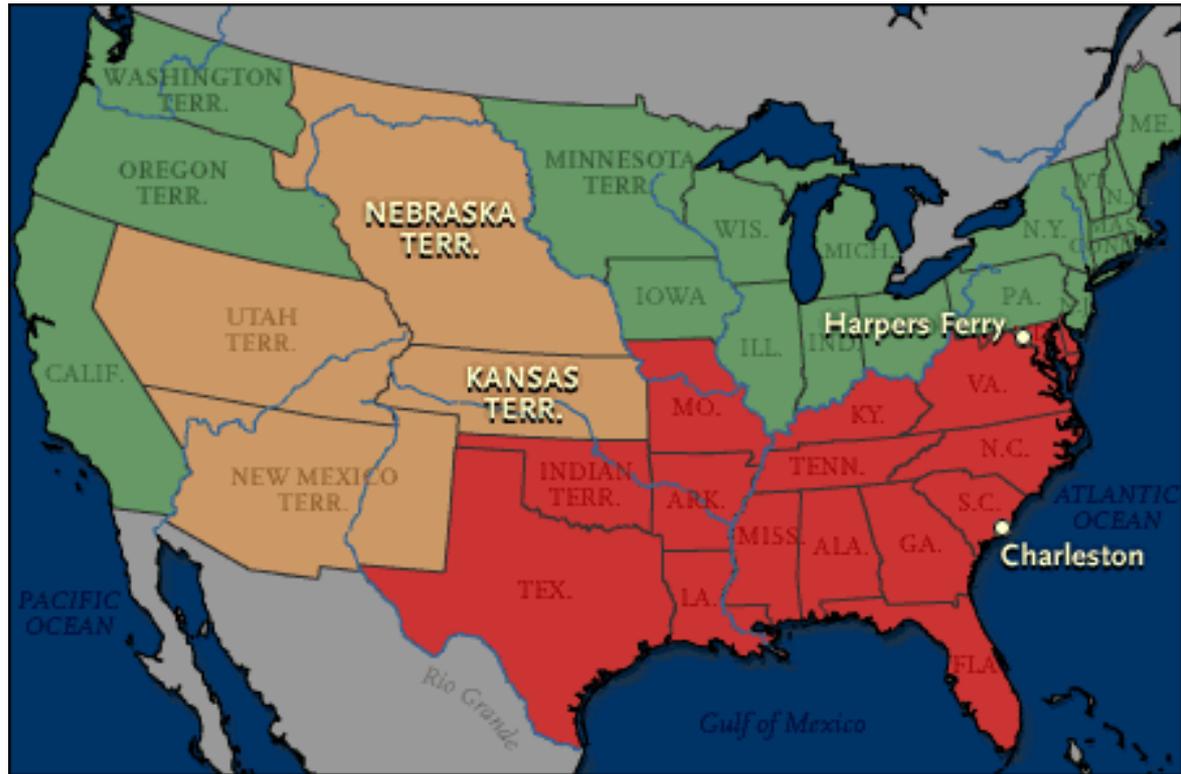
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The creation of new states became ever more entangled in the slavery debate. The Missouri Compromise of 1820 had stabilized the conflict for three decades when it made Missouri a slave state and slavery illegal in future states north of the boundary between Missouri and Arkansas. The Kansas-Nebraska Act of 1854 repealed that compromise, allowing the two territories to decide for themselves whether to allow slavery. Supporters of both sides moved to Kansas to try and influence that state's decision and tensions soon ran high.





http://www.learner.org/biographyofamerica/prog10/maps/images/map_10_a.gif

John Brown was an abolitionist who moved to Kansas in the 1850s hoping to influence whether Kansas entered the United States as a free or slave state. Brown, a devout Christian, believed that slavery violated biblical teachings. In 1856, Brown and his followers led a raid that resulted in the killing of five pro-slavery settlers. This notorious event brought Brown national attention.





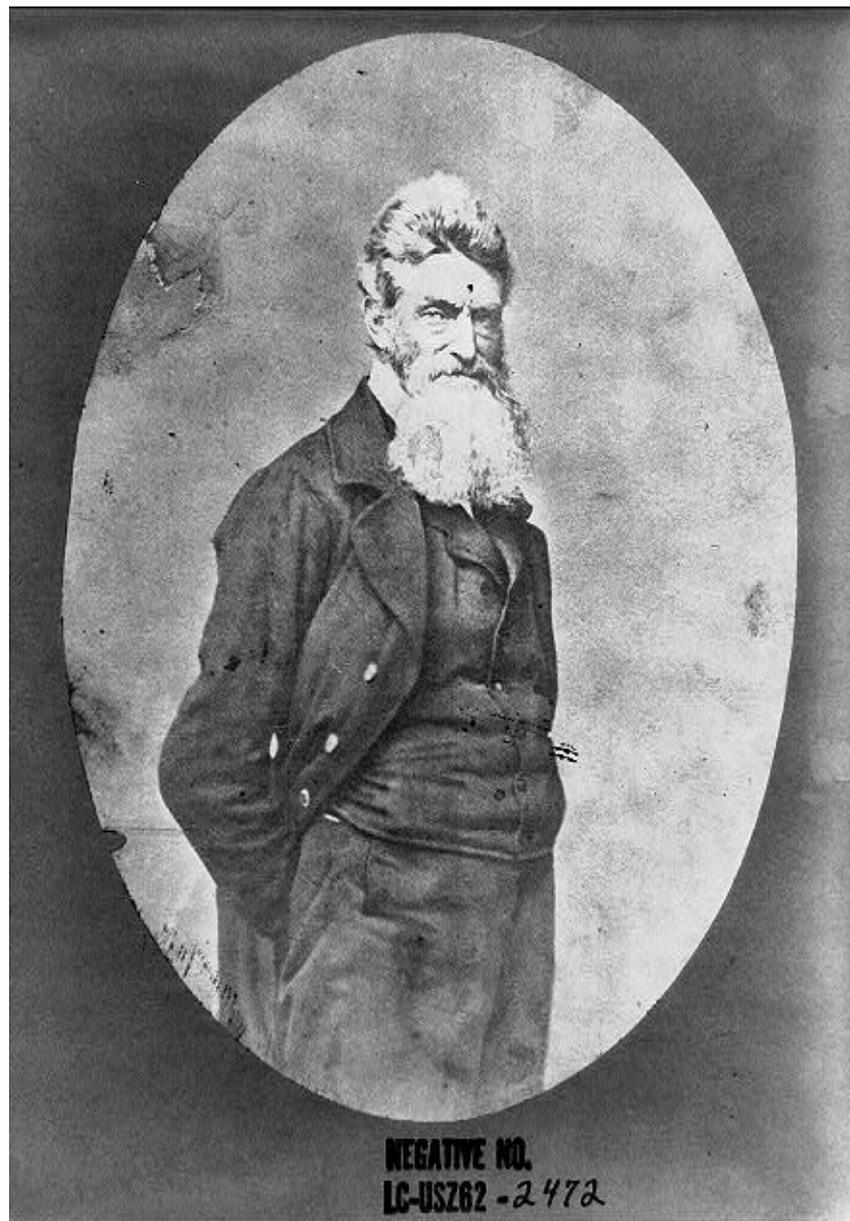
Settlers fighting in Kansas over the issue of slavery.

http://www.constitutioncenter.org/timeline/html/cw05_12055.html

Two years later, Brown and his band of men, attacked two homesteads in Missouri, killing one of the planters and liberating eleven slaves. Brown and his men traveled for 82 days to deliver the refugees safely to Canada. Preparations for the raid on Harpers Ferry were soon to follow.



http://americanart.si.edu/1001/2000/10/images/1992.113.3A_1b.jpg



<http://memory.loc.gov/service/pnp/cph/3a00000/3a06000/3a06100/3a06152r.jpg>

In 1859, Brown, his sons, and a group of men—black and white—planned to raid the United States National Armory and Arsenal in Harpers Ferry, Virginia. Stored in that arsenal were 100,000 stands of arms. Some historians believe that Brown hoped to use these weapons to liberate and arm slaves throughout the South.



“Harper’s Ferry insurrection – battle ground – Captain Alberts’ party attacking the insurgents – view of the railroad bridge, the engine-house, and the village / from a sketch by our special artist.” Illustration. *Frank Leslie’s illustrated newspaper*, Nov. 5, 1859. From Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Online Catalog. <http://lcweb2.loc.gov/pp/pphome.html>.

FEARFUL AND EXCITING INTELLIGENCE.

NEGRO INSURRECTION AT HARPER'S FERRY.

**Extensive Negro Conspiracy in
Virginia and Maryland.**

**Seizure of the United States Arsenal
by the Insurrectionists.**

**Arms Taken and Sent into the
Interior.**

**The Bridge Fortified and Defended
by Cannon.**

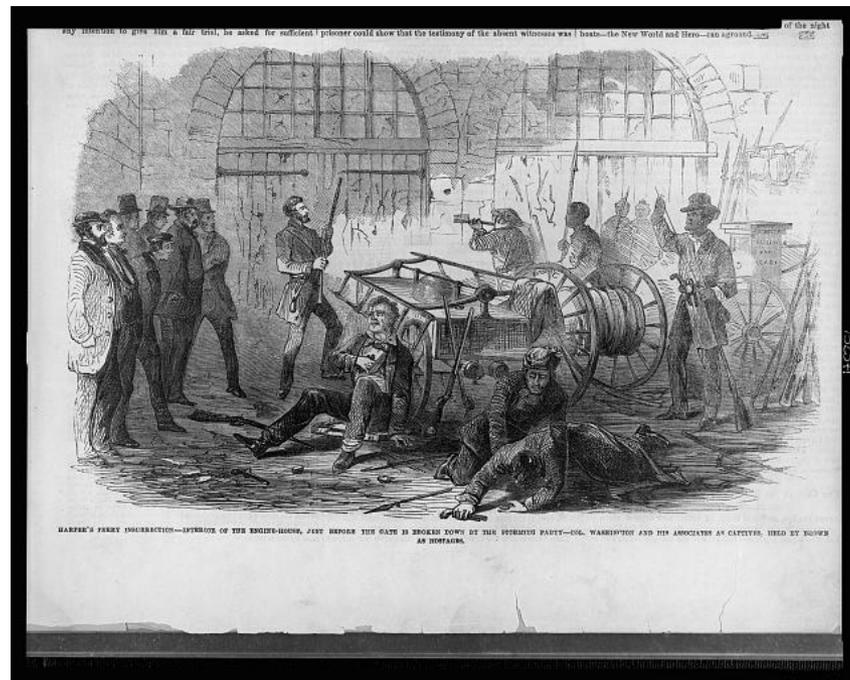
**Trains Fired into and Stopped---Several Per-
sons Killed---Telegraph Wires Cut---
Contributions Levied on the Citizens.**

**Troops Despatched Against the Insurgents
from Washington and Baltimore,**

&c.,

&c.,

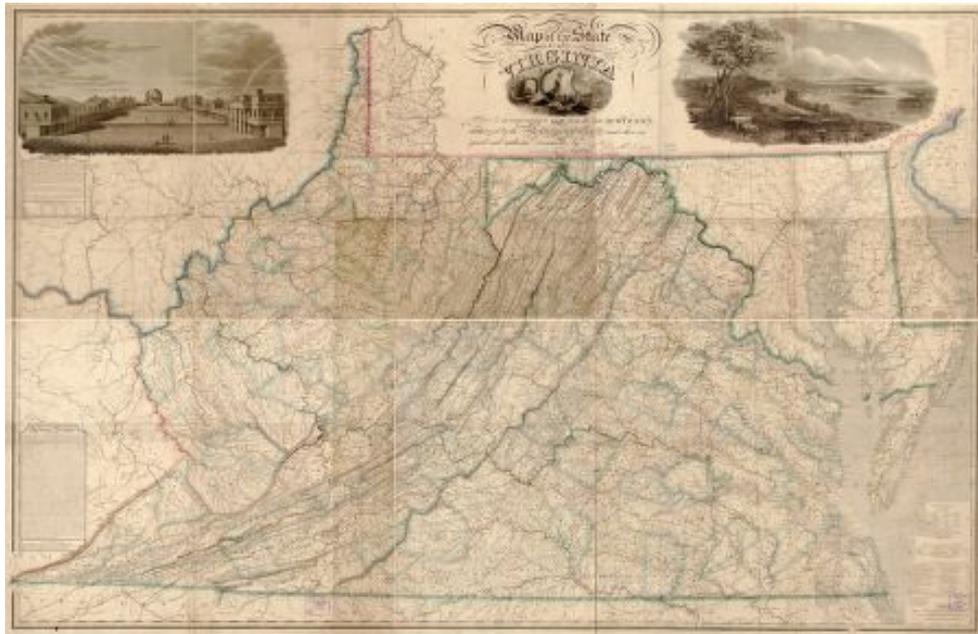
&c.



“Harper’s Ferry insurrection – Interior of the Engine-House, just before the gate is broken down by the storming party – Col. Washington and his associates as captives, held by Brown as hostages.” Illustration. *Frank Leslie’s illustrated newspaper*, Nov. 5, 1859. From Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Online Catalog. <http://lcweb2.loc.gov/pp/pphome.html>.

<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/aia/part4/4h1538b.html>

The State of Virginia was a stronghold of slavery and southern culture, in which large planters dominated politics. Eastern Virginia had excellent soil, but due to decades of over-farming its economy increasingly focused on the breeding and sale of enslaved peoples for the rapidly developing Cotton Belt stretching from South Carolina to Texas.



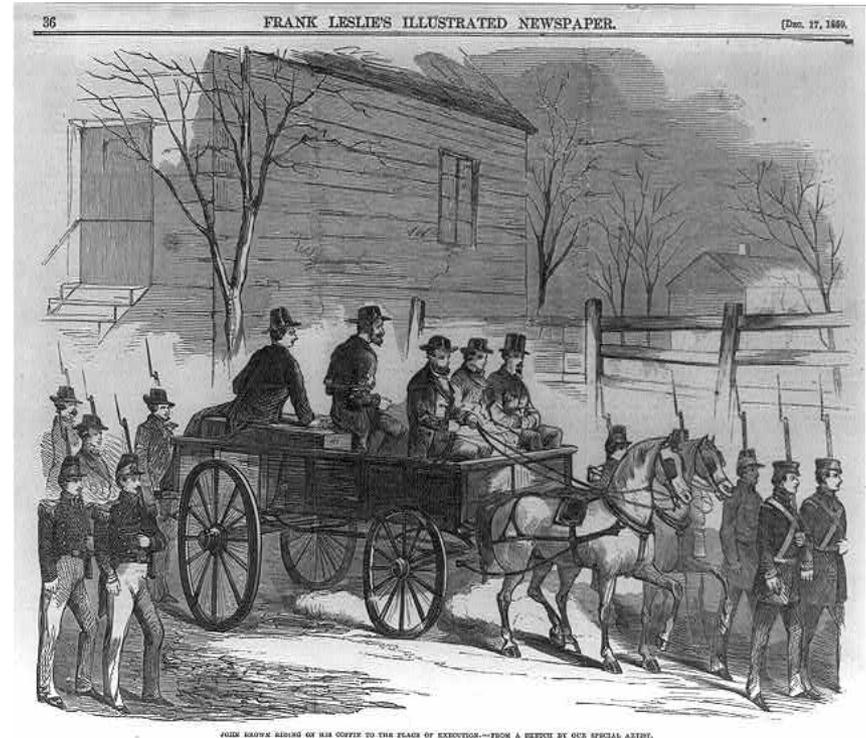
*Böje, Herman. A map of the state of Virginia, constructed in conformity to law from the late surveys authorized by the legislature and other original and authentic documents. Map. [Virginia : s.n., 1859] ([Washington, D.C. : Selmar Siebert and Co.]). From Library of Congress, *Map collections: 1500-Present*. <http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/gmdhtml/gnrlhome.html>*

Western Virginia was hilly and rich with such resources as coal and iron ore. This side of Virginia differed from the plantation-based region, both in lifestyle and necessity for slavery. At the border of eastern and western Virginia, at the confluence of two rivers, stood Harpers Ferry. Harpers Ferry was a transportation hub and home of the United States National Armory and Arsenal.

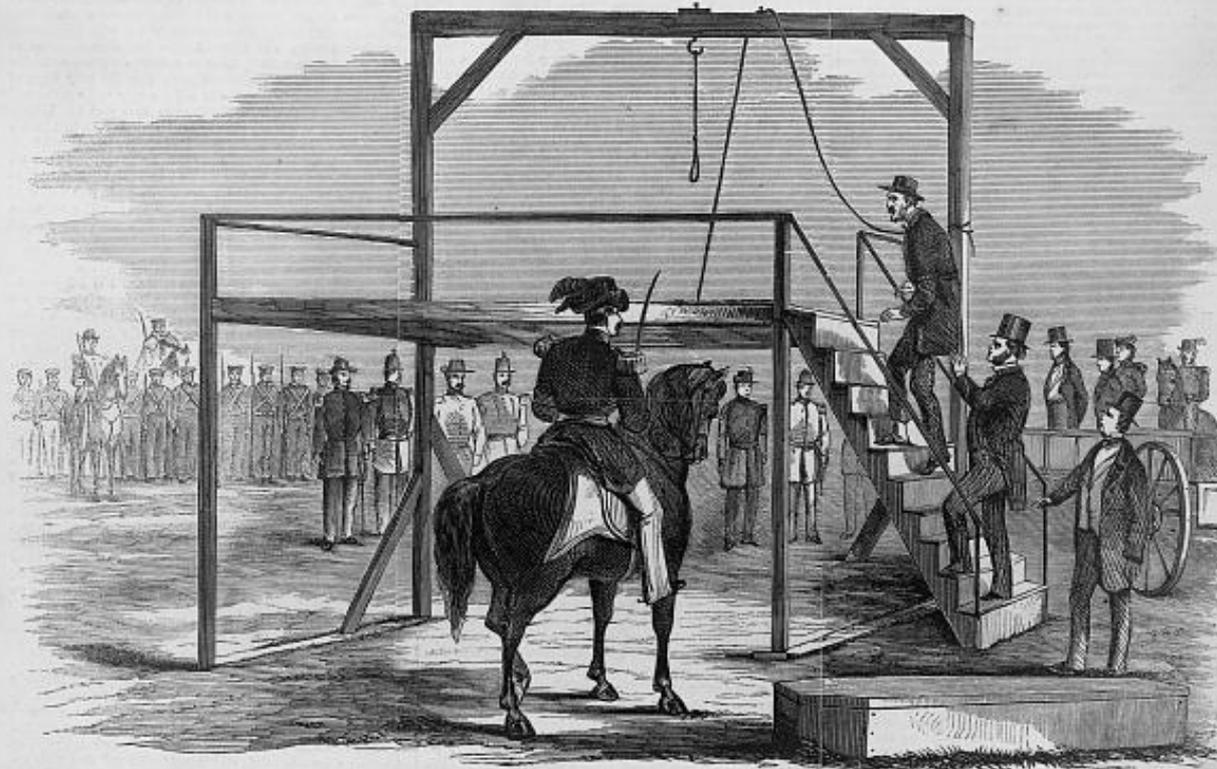


<http://www.wam.umd.edu/~sfmiller/Harpers%20Ferry/harpers%20ferry%201859.jpg>

**Now it is late 1859.
Brown's raid was unsuccessful.
Whether John Brown's goal
was to capture the weapons to
arm a rebellion or to stand his
ground in an act of symbolism,
the raid resulted in the death or
capture of most of Brown's
men. Brown has been tried for
his crimes and will be hanged
in a matter of days.**



“John Brown riding on his coffin to the place of execution [Charlestown, W. Va.]” Illustration. *Frank Leslie's illustrated newspaper*, Dec. 17, 1859. From Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Online Catalog. <http://lcweb2.loc.gov/pp/pphome.html>



JOHN BROWN ASCENDING THE SCAFFOLD PREPARATORY TO BEING HANGED.—FROM A SKETCH BY OUR SPECIAL ARTIST.

“John Brown ascending the scaffold preparatory to being hanged / from a sketch by our special artist.” Illustration. *Frank Leslie's illustrated newspaper*, Dec. 17, 1859. From Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Online Catalog. <http://lcweb2.loc.gov/pp/pphome.html>

- You are a free black resident of Harpers Ferry.
- How do you feel about John Brown's raid?
- How has the event changed your life?
- Do you marvel at his courage or do you condemn his actions?
- Would you have joined him if given the chance or would you take up arms against him?
- Have the interactions between the white citizens and black citizens changed in any way?